

Coalition Against Worker Discrimination

www.ProtectInghamJobs.org

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Groups unite against Ingham County union-only policy

A coalition of local business groups is opposing adoption of a Project Labor Agreement (PLA) policy in Ingham County. Associated Builders and Contractors of Michigan and Central Michigan, along with the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Lansing Home Builders Association and the National Federation of Independent Businesses, fear the proposed policy will cause higher construction costs and discrimination against the majority of local construction workers.

“Our specific concern is that PLAs often require construction workers to be unionized in order to work on publicly funded projects,” explained ABC Michigan President **Chris Fisher**. “Such provisions exclude 70 to 80 percent of the local workforce and infringe upon the equal opportunity rights of working men and women. When counties limit the potential work force to a select few, costs tend to increase, sometimes by as much as 20 percent, according to an overwhelming number of national studies. For example, a May 2006 study by the Beacon Hill Institute at Suffolk University in Boston, Massachusetts, found that the use of PLAs on school construction projects in New York increased the cost of the projects by 20 percent.

The coalition does not oppose Ingham County reviewing its contracting policies, as long as they allow for fair and equitable work opportunities on taxpayer-funded

projects. The group recently launched a website with information for the public at *ProtectInghamJobs.org*.

“We’re urging Ingham County to adopt a policy that is inclusive to both union and non-union workers and contractors,” Fisher explained. “In so doing, the commission will foster harmony and fairness in the county’s purchasing policies and protocols. As a public entity, the county should strive to avoid bias when spending public money.”

At the March County Services Committee meeting, Fisher outlined recommendations for inclusive PLAs that are non-discriminatory and ensure high quality construction in Ingham County.

ABC Michigan is a statewide trade association representing the commercial construction industry and dedicated to equal opportunity in contracting. Its Central Michigan Chapter is based in Lansing. The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce represents large and small businesses in Ingham, Eaton and Clinton County. The Greater Lansing Home Builders Association represents homebuilders, suppliers, subcontractors and others who support the home building industry. Lansing based NFIB-Michigan is a leading advocacy organization representing small business.

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